

Message Text

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PAGE 01 JIDDA 04909 131121Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----034290 131122Z /20

O R 131040Z JUL 77
FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8918
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L JIDDA 4909

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS, MILI, LE, US, SA
SUBJECT: REBUILDING LEBANON'S ARMY: THOUGHTS ON THE SAUDI
VIEW OF US ASSISTANCE

REF STATE 155131

1. WE FEEL THAT THE SAG WOULD WELCOME U.S. ASSISTANCE IN
REBUILDING THE LEBANESE ARMY PROVIDING THAT IT WOULD NOT APPEAR
TO BE AN ATTEMPT TO CREATE AN ANTI-PALESTINIAN OR ANTI-MUSLIM
FORCE. SAG WOULD PROBABLY SUPPORT SARKIS IN USING THE ARMY TO
EXTEND HIS AUTHORITY OVER CHRISTIAN, MUSLIM, AND PALESTINIAN
ELEMENTS UNLESS THE SARKIS REGIME BEGINS TO TAKE ON A MARKEDLY
ANTI-MULSIM (OR ANTI-PALESTINIAN) COMPLEXION.

2. AS THE DEPARTMENT IS WELL AWARE, SAUDI RELATIONS WITH
THE PLO ARE EXCELLENT, AND SAG HAS BEEN ABLE TO EXERT CON-
SIDERABLE INFLUENCE ON THE PLO LEADERSHIP. (THE DEPARTMENT
WILL RECALL SAG ASSISTANCE WITH THE PLO DURING THE EVACUATION
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PAGE 02 JIDDA 04909 131121Z

OF BEIRUT LAST YEAR.) THE SAG--MORE SPECIFICALLY CROWN PRINCE
FAHD--WOULD HAVE SOME CONCERN THAT SUPPORT FOR THE LEBANESE
ARMY WOULD NOT DISTURB SAG'S RELATIONS WITH THE PLO.

3. IT ALSO SEEMS TO US THAT IT IS HIGHLY UNLIKELY THAT SAG
WOULD SUPPORT THE BUILDING OF AN ARMY IN THE OLD CONFESSIONAL
MOLD WHERE CHRISTIANS DOMINATE SUCH A FORCE.

4. WE BELIEVE THAT WE SHOULD CONSULT CLOSELY WITH THE SAUDIS ON HOW VISIBLE U.S. ASSISTANCE SHOULD BE IN REBUILDING THE LEBANESE ARMY AND WHAT ROLE THE SAUDIS SHOULD PLAY. THE SAUDIS MAY WISH TO APPEAR AS PART OF THE EFFORT, PROVIDED THAT THEIR CONCERNS IN PARAS 1-3 ARE MET. SAUDI PARTICIPATION MIGHT HELP ASSURE THE SAG THAT THE EXPANDED FORCE WOULD NOT COME UNDER THE DOMINATION OF THE MORE RADICAL ARAB STATES.

5. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE SAG HAS BEEN TRADITIONALLY VERY CAUTIOUS IN INVOLVING ITSELF IN POLITICAL-MILITARY ACTIVITY BEYOND ITS OWN BORDERS AND WOULD PROBABLY BE SLOW TO ASSUME SUCH A ROLE IN LEBANON. IT MIGHT PREFER TO LET THE USG TAKE THE LEAD ALTHOUGH SOME SAG FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION TO A U.S. SPONSORED PROGRAM WOULD BE A DEFINITE POSSIBILITY PROVIDED THE END RESULT WOULD APPEAR TO MEET SAUDI INTERESTS AND CONCERNS.
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Message Attributes

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